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ADDRESS

OF
ISAIAH THORNTON WILLIAMS,

ON THE

PRESENTATION OF COLORS

TO THE

FIFTH REGIMENT OF MAINE VOLUNTEERS,

IN THE CITY HALL PARK.

IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK.

On the 27th day of June, 1861

New York

S. BRADFORD BOOK & CO. PRINTERS, 14 FULTON STREET

1861



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COLONEL DUNNELL, Officers, and Soldiers of the Fifth Regiment of Maine Volunteers—Citizens of New York, who claim, in common with you, a birth-place upon the soil of that gallant State which you have just left, beg you to accept, as your Regimental Colors, this Standard. They have witnessed with satisfaction the prompt and enthusiastic response of their native State to the Executive call. They participate in the pride with which she has sent, and is still sending, to the battle-field brave and stalwart men such as I now see before me. They desire to be identified with the fortunes of the land of their birth, and to be partakers in the glory to be achieved by her soldiers in this great war for our national existence. Accept, therefore, this banner from your brethren of New York, in token that, in going out from you, they have never ceased to be of you. The motto here inscribed will not only remind you of the nature of the contest in which you are engaged, but it will inspire your hearts with the valor which achieved the freedom you are resolved to maintain—that freedom, whose voice awakened the echoes of the primeval forest, rolled back the deep night of barbarism, dispelled the mists of superstition, reared the temples of worship, and

the halls of learning, endowed the home, and hallowed the fireside, established a government on the basis of equal rights, formed commercial relations with every nation on the globe, covered the whole land with cultivated fields, thriving villages, and populous cities, poured into our lap opulence and art, embellished life with innumerable improvements and blessings that exalt and enoble our nature, till the whole land had become a theatre of wonders on which the admiring gaze of the world was fixed in trembling hope of human progress, if not of the actual perfectability of human nature. The faithful of the land, the hearts that tremble for the ark of our political destinies—for our future onward and upward progress—have committed this great, this inestimable, treasure to the armed bands who have left, and who are now, like you, leaving the avocations of peace in obedience to the stern call of war. It is for you to determine whether this freedom shall yet survive, or be shrouded with a funereal pall, and wrapped in eternal gloom. The magnitude of the cause will swell your hearts with all that is lofty in sentiment, inspiring and holy in hope, enthusiastic and noble in daring. Baptize this banner with all the sentiment, the enthusiasm, the hopes, the inspirations which your cause cannot fail to awaken; and let it be the flaming pillar which beckons you on—

—————“Where showers
“The death bolt deadliest the thin files along,
“Even where the thickest of war’s tempest lowers.”

Count not his life lost who falls upon the field of honor. The hearts that break for him, when the lightning wires have brought his honored name to the banks of the Saen, will yet glow, if it be in broken fragments, with pride and exultation. Some gray-haired man will tell how fell his fondest, best-beloved son, while rushing into the thickest of the fight--fell covered with wounds, yet "scorned to yield a groan in dying." Some mother's vision--who pays that higher tribute of silence to the dead--will see the hero's smile upon the radiant face of her dying boy --

"As he turns his eye and spreads his hand,
"To the star above his native land."

The memory of the dead, who so shall fall, will live bright in village annals, and many a manly eye be moistened when, in time to come, he shall recall the events of this war, and recount the brave who fell. The annals of war are the brightest pages of history.

"Bright names do hallow song."

The scene of each battle-field lives anew in verse and story, and is sung and related by continents of men, far, far removed by birth, by language, and by time from the contending parties - related, too, with all the emotion and enthusiasm that can animate our common nature. Who, without emotion, has ever read of Leonidas, with his three hundred, holding the pass of Thermopylae against

the myriads of Xerxes? Of Reding on the field of Morgarten, at the head of a handful of Swiss peasants, driving back the legions of France? Would Sir John Moore have felt one pang of regret had destiny warned him before-hand of his heroic fall in the moment of victory beneath the walls of Corunna? Would Nelson have regretted the quarter-deck on which he was doomed to meet a hero's death? Would Warren have sorrowed at the sacrifice his own self-devoting heart forced upon him at Bunker Hill? Nathan Hale was hung as a spy on this very Island—it may be, on the very spot whereon we now stand. He suffered, as he thought, alone, with no one to tell his story. Yet—

“He lives in the verse that immortally saves.”

But you will not fall. The nation will not fall. Liberty will not be driven from her last asylum. You go accompanied with every omen of triumph. Civilization, Liberty, Religion, summon you to the field. They are interested in your success. They seem to hang suspended in the balances of war. The illustrious dead, whose hands wove the glorious fabric of our free government, are watching with intense anxiety the issue of this contest. Voices, solemn as that which from the tomb of Achilles warned his countrymen not to leave unhonored the memory of the slain, now urge the patriot forward in defence of liberty, nationality, and civilization, whose very essence is periled in

the unparalleled crime which threatens the integrity of our Union. The true-hearted of all castes and creeds, of all political associations, and of all party denominations, have "sworn by Him that sitteth upon the throne, and liveth forever and ever," that the sword now drawn shall never be returned to its scabbard until our glorious banner shall wave in triumph alike at Charleston and New Orleans—over the walls of Sumter and along the Mississippi—until it shall be recognized and honored upon every inch of territory over which, in the proudest days of the Republic, it waved, and until the leaders in this nefarious and unprovoked rebellion shall have expiated their offence where criminals make their last expiation to the loyal.

"O day three lovely! when at length the soldier
 Returns home into life,
 The colors are unfurled; the evanescing
 Marshes, and now the buzz is hushed, mid-hark!
 Now the soft peace-march beats, "Home, brothers, home!"
 The spear and the mets are laid garlanded
 With grape-vine boughs, the last clambering of the fields,
 The city gates are open of themselves
 The campions are arrayed with men and women,
 With peasant men and women, who sail onwards
 Kisses and welcomeings upon the air,
 Which they make breezy with affection's gestures—
 From all the towers ring out the merry peal,
 The joyous vespers of a bloody day?"

Sustained by influence and buoyed by hopes like these, go forth, ye defenders of your country! And may He, to whom the shields of the earth

belong, protect you in the day of battle! May He inspire you with that assurance of success which springs from His presence! May He breathe into your hearts the spirit of departed heroes, and inspire you with his own! Then, indeed, "shall the strong man be as tow, and the maker of it as a spark; and they shall burn together, and none shall quench them."



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